

ACTS STUDY QUESTIONS, WEEK 3

A Martyrdom and a Conversion

Monday, May 31—Acts 6:1-15

1. In 6:1 we find the fellowship enjoyed earlier in the book threatened (see 2:43-47). Yet, this situation becomes one more circumstance through which the church flourishes (6:7; see also 9:31; 12:24; 16:5). Consider how vital the church's fellowship is for its witness among others. How can we imitate that in our own church community today?

2. How many of us act like “angels” when we are falsely accused (6:15)? Ask the Spirit to help you meet hostile situations – wherever they may arise – with grace and wisdom.

Tuesday, June 1—Acts 7:1-53

1. Stephen's speech is the longest in Acts and recounts many Old Testament themes. How does this speech answer the accusations that have been leveled against Stephen? How “handy” is the Old Testament when it comes to our thinking about God?

2. Much of Christian history has been marred by the Church's treatment of the Jewish people. Is Stephen blaming Jews in 7:51-53? How might we answer those who might say this passage is “anti-Semitic” (i.e., “against Jews”)? One clue can be found in 7:2.

Wednesday, June 2—Acts 7:54-Acts 8:8

1. Stephen's situation is similar to Jesus' in many ways (see esp. 7:59-60). How does Stephen's testimony continue the work that Jesus is doing in the world (see 1:1-2, 8)? How might Stephen's attitude in death shape our attitude in day-to-day life? What about Stephen's martyrdom do you find most moving?

2. Saul's persecution and Philip's ministry move the story forward in the plan laid out in 1:8. Reflect on how persecution of various sorts contributes to growth and life in God's eyes. Take a moment right now to pray for persecuted believers around the world.

Thursday, June 3—Acts 8:9-39

1. How many of us act like Simon? In what ways might Simon's request seem innocent? How often do we blend good intentions with less honorable means of attainment?

2. So the Church takes the gospel to Samaria, a place well-known at that time for its theological and racial “illegitimacy.” Ask God and consider whether there is anyone or any group that you tend to overlook. Is the Holy Spirit challenging you to break down walls – however great or small – in your own life?

3. This passage demonstrates well how the Spirit governs the affairs of the Church. It is as though the Church is continually playing catch-up with the Spirit's work. Can you identify one specific issue that the Spirit is moving you to act on? Pray about it.

Friday, June 4—Acts 9:1-31

1. Many people feel the need to describe their conversion with same sort of suddenness as Paul experienced. But how often is conversion more gradual – more like the rest of the Apostles? How do these two ways of coming to Christ affect how we witness to others?

2. In 9:31 we find a kind of “milestone” for the journey laid out in 1:8. Can you guess how Paul is an important piece of the puzzle for the completion of this journey? What else is necessary for the gospel to reach “the ends of the earth”? Keep reading next week as Peter's experiences provide still another piece for the advance of the gospel!

This week's questions were written by FBCP's Daniel Willson. Daniel is an M.Div. student at Fuller Seminary and is interested in teaching ministry and Christian education. He has served in various ministry settings in South Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, and California and has recently contributed to the Baker Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible (forthcoming). After graduating next year Daniel hopes to continue his studies, but in the mean time he plans to serve as FBCP's newest intern and cheer on Brazil in the World Cup with his wife Wendy and his two daughters Janessa and Breanna. Please make sure you thank Daniel for his efforts in putting these questions together.